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HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF

STURBRIDGE, MASS.

FROM ITS SETTLEMENT TO THE PRESENT TIME.

BY JOSEPH S. CLARK,

Pastor of the Congregational Church in Sturbridge.

"I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times."

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NOTICE.

THE first part of the following sketch, embracing the civil history of the town, is the substance of a centennial address delivered to the citizens of Sturbridge, July 4, 1838, ten days after the *one hundredth* anniversary of its incorporation as a town. The spirit of the day on which it was delivered, was thought, at the time, to be a sufficient apology for lingering so long on the period of the Revolutionary war. The remaining part, which is a simple narrative of Ecclesiastical affairs, was chiefly embodied in a sermon, and preached on the Sabbath following. The author received from his fellow citizens, by their committee, a polite request for its publication, immediately after its delivery. Feeble health and absence from home rendered it impossible for him at that time to give it such a revision as he desired. And although many important facts have since been added, he regrets that he has been unable to pursue his investigations to the extent which he intended. The history, such as it is, he affectionately tenders to the inhabitants of Sturbridge and that part of Southbridge originally included within its limits,—fully aware that it can awaken but little interest amongst any others.

The sources from which the facts have been drawn, are the Town and Church Records, the reminiscences of the aged, and such traditions as could be easily authenticated. The author takes pleasure in acknowledging his obligations to the many friends who have assisted his enquiries, especially to Moses Plimpton, Esq. of Southbridge, for many important items respecting the first settlers, which, with a commendable zeal, he has saved from oblivion, and kindly furnished for this sketch.

HISTORICAL SKETCH.

STURBRIDGE was originally settled by a company of emigrants, chiefly from Medfield and a few other towns in that vicinity. In their petition to the General Court for a grant, the contemplated township is described as "a tract of land lying between Oxford, Brookfield, Brimfield, and the Province line," and was then called *Dumer*,

The settlement was undertaken in much the same spirit which actuated the Pilgrims of New England, and was attended with difficulties which bear some resemblance to theirs. The company very generally were in low circumstances of property, "many of whom," say they in their petition, "are destitute of settlements for themselves, and not well able to purchase necessary accommodations in towns already settled; and the other of the petitioners being in want of lands for their descendants." Three times they petitioned the General Court before their request was granted;—first in Nov. 1727, then in April 1729, and finally in Sept. the same year.

We know not for what reason their prayer was so long refused, unless it was, as the petitioners themselves remark in their last appeal, "probably for that the Honourable Council might judge that the tract of land prayed for *is not capable of making a township*." Indeed, this will appear not far from the true reason, if it be considered that the Committee sent out by the General Court to view the land, reported its value at only £1000. Paternal kindness forbade the thought of permitting a colony of loyal subjects thus to throw themselves away in a fruitless attempt to erect a town on such an unpropitious spot. The judgment of the company, however, on this subject, differed very materially from that of his Majesty's "Honourable Council." In reply to this supposed objection, they say, "Your petitioners humbly beg leave to inform this honourable Court, that although there is indeed much poor land contained therein, yet there is also a

considerable quantity of good land fit for settlement; and in our humble opinion a sufficiency to enable your petitioners, *by the blessing of God, in concurrence with diligence and industry*, to support the ordinary charges of a township."

At length, on the 3d of Sept. 1729, the grant was made, on conditions, however, which show that the Government was still doubting how the experiment would end. Nothing was required for the land, although the petitioners had expressed their willingness to pay its estimated value. Instead of exacting this, the General Court put them under the following obligations:—"In seven years' time from this date to settle and have actually on the spot 50 families, each of which to build an house of 18 feet square at least.—To break up, and bring to, fit for ploughing and mowing (and what is not fit for ploughing to be well stocked with English grass) seven acres of land.—To settle an orthodox minister, and lay out to him an home lot, equal to the other home lots; which lot shall draw the fiftieth part of the Province land now granted, and to be accounted as one of the 50 that are to be settled."

In addition to these terms it was also required that no one of the company should "sell, alienate, or dispose of his lot, or right, or any part thereof" during the seven years, unless to an actual settler, "in penalty of forfeiting the same to the Province." William Ward, Esq. one of the petitioners, was "empowered and directed to assemble the grantees and act as moderator" of that meeting. Their whole number was 42, and their names stand on the Proprietors' Records in the following order;—

Melatiah Bourn Esq.
William Ward Esq.
Ezra Bourn
Shuball Goram
Thomas Learned
Nathan Fiske
Henry Fiske
Capt. Ebenezer Learned
Nahum Ward
Gersham Keyes
Zerobabel Eager
John Sherman
Joseph Baker
Jonas Haughton

Timothy Hament
William Plimpton
Ephriam Partridge
Abraham Harding
Moses Harding
Josiah Ellis
Peter Balch
Ezra Clark
Samuel Ellis
David Ellis
Francis Moquet
Henry Adams
Ichabod Harding
John Plimpton

Thomas Gleason
 Moses Gleason
 Jonas Gleason
 Joshua Morse
 Joseph Plimpton
 Nathaniel Smith
 Solomon Clark

Josiah Cheney
 Capt. John Dwight
 Capt. Jonathan Boyden
 Capt. Joseph Clark
 Nathaniel Morse
 James Denison
 Joseph Marsh.

Some others were admitted into partnership with these soon after the grant was obtained, among whom were Nehemiah Allen, Moses Allen, Seth Wight, David Morse, Moses Marcy, David Shumway, and John Harding.

Their first meeting as Proprietors of this soil was held at the Inn of Joshua Morse in Medfield, and, with only two or three exceptions, all their subsequent meetings for public business during the first seven years were held at the same place. The settlement soon began to be called New-Medfield, and Dumer became an obsolete name. Abraham Harding was appointed Clerk of the Company; an office which he sustained without intermission till the town was incorporated. The records which remain in his hand-writing, exhibit a neatness and accuracy seldom to be found among the archives of that age.

Their first business was to lay out 50 home lots, corresponding to the number of families that must be settled within seven years. Owing to the great inequalities of soil in the different parts of the township, it was no easy matter to make a perfectly equitable distribution. The method which they finally adopted, seems as free from difficulties as any that we can imagine, and certainly shows an honest aim at impartial justice. A committee was appointed with the following instructions:—"To lay out 100 lots in the best of our land, adding to the poorest lots a quantity of acres (according to the best of their judgment) to make them as equal in value to the best as they can, none of the aforesaid 100 lots to be less than 50 acres; and when they have so done, then to couple two lots together, and make them as equal, each couple or pair, as they can, and fit for draught for the aforesaid associates, grantees." On the 9th of July 1730, the lots were drawn, and each proprietor was at liberty to enter upon the arduous task of clearing away the forest, building him a house, and improving his land.

It is not to be understood, however, that they all actually removed to this place. Some, as before observed, enlisted in the undertaking

for the purpose of obtaining a settlement for their children. Others joined in the petition merely to aid those who were more directly interested, and shortly after sold their right in whole or in part, to such as were willing to settle here on the terms prescribed by the General Court. It nevertheless appears to be a fact, that the first settlers of this town, with but few exceptions, were either its original proprietors, or the children of those who were.

These hardy pioneers, if tradition tell the truth, came chiefly on foot and alone into an almost unbroken forest, with each a good axe on his shoulder, and a pack to his back containing whatever provisions and utensils would best enable him to grapple with rude nature in single combat. The wolf and the wild-cat had never yet been driven from this their ancient dominion, and the timid deer bounded across the footman's path and hid himself in the impenetrable thicket. At length the resounding axe began to be heard from one hill and answered from another. Openings appeared in the dense forest, and the curling smoke might be seen ascending from here and there a hut.

It is not easy, at this distant day, to form any adequate idea of the solitary, self-denying circumstances in which these first comers found themselves placed. The following facts may shed some light on this part of their history.

Henry Fiske, one of the original proprietors, and his brother Daniel, pitched their tent near the top of the hill which has ever since borne their name. They had been at work for some time without knowing which way they must look for their nearest neighbor, or whether indeed they had a neighbor nearer than one of the adjacent towns. At length on a clear afternoon they heard the sound of an axe far off in a southerly direction, and went in pursuit of it. The individual whose solitary axe they heard, had also been attracted by the sound of their's, and was advancing towards them on the same errand. They came in sight of one another, on opposite sides of the Quinebaug river. By felling two trees into the stream, one from each bank, a bridge was constructed on which they were able to meet and exchange salutations. The unknown man of the axe was found to be James Denison, one of the proprietors, who in the absence of a better home had taken lodgings in a *cave*, which is still to be seen not far from Westvill. In that lonely den he continued his abode, it is said, till a neighboring wolf, who probably had a prior

claim to the premises, signified a wish to take possession, when Mr. Denison peaceably withdrew and built him a house of his own.*

For some time after the work of clearing the forest had been undertaken, no one had ventured to spend the *winter* in a place so desolate, and distant from the track of man. The proprietors, or whomsoever they employed, usually came in the spring, and returned to their respective towns in the autumn. Joseph Smith, with no other companion than his faithful dog, was the first who encountered the rigors of winter in Sturbridge. Alexander Selkirk was not more secluded from human society on the island of Juan Fernandez, than Mr. Smith was in this place during four months, having neither seen, nor heard from, a human being in all that time. The cellar which protected his frugal store from the frosts of that dreary winter, may still be seen on the farm of Jabez Harding Esq. not far from an aged Pear-tree, which Mr. Smith is said to have planted soon after he came.

On the 29th of Nov. 1733 the company made a second division of land, at which time it was voted that "Moses Marcy have a 50 acre lot granted him, if he will build a grist-mill on the Quinebaug river at the dam where the said Marcy hath built a saw-mill"—to be completed before the last of Sept. 1736. I conclude, therefore, that whoever in this town had occasion to "go to mill" before the last of Sept. 1736, went either to Brimfield, Brookfield, Oxford or into Connecticut. Perhaps, however, they had no occasion to go; for it is reported by some of the oldest of their descendants now living, that their principal diet at first was *boiled beans*. These they usually prepared on the evening of one day in sufficient quantities for the breakfast and dinner of the next. So that *cooking*, which with us has be-

* Mr. Denison was a native of Scotland. His parents both dying when he was young, he went to live with an aunt. When he was about 16 years of age, he was enticed from home, and embarked on board a vessel bound for New-England. On his arrival in this country, having no other means of paying for his passage, he bound himself to the service of the Captain. His master disposed of him to a farmer living in Medfield, whom the youthful adventurer served for the space of four years and eight months. When he became of age, his only earthly estate, besides the clothes on his back, consisted of *twenty-five cents*, which he obtained for the skins of two Muskrats that he had trapped. Being a young man of industrious habits, he was admitted into partnership with the company which was then forming in that town and vicinity for the settlement of Sturbridge. Mr. Denison married his wife in Medfield, and removed her to this town in May 1732. She was probably the first woman that ever shared the toils, or enjoyed the bliss of domestic life in Sturbridge. On the 31st of August following, she became the mother of *Experience Denison*, the first child that was born in the town, and subsequently the wife of Capt. Ralph Wheelock, from whom a numerous and respectable family have descended.

come such a difficult and engrossing part of household care, they despatched with great ease and in little time.* On the whole it appears, that the honoured fathers of this town were men of hardihood, resolution, self-denial; and that they found sufficient scope for the exercise of these gifts during the first few years of their residence here.

The work of settlement went on with increasing rapidity in defiance of all obstacles, till at the end of seven years this little community of New-Medfield could number "50 families" with each "an house of 18 feet square at least," surrounded by "seven acres of land broke up and brought to, fit for ploughing and mowing," and had "settled an orthodox minister." Having thus fulfilled the conditions of the grant, on the 24th of June 1738, they were incorporated into a town, and the name of *Sturbridge* took the place of New-Medfield, as that had formerly supplanted Dumer.

By an order of General Court accompanying the Act of Incorporation, Moses Marcy, who is therein styled "one of the principal inhabitants,"† was "authorized and empowered to assemble the free-

* The office of cook, however, even in those days of simple fare, was not entirely free from perplexity. Their household conveniences were by no means the best. It is said that Messrs. Henry and Daniel Fiske on one occasion lost their supper, and with it the principal part of their culinary apparatus, by the unlucky fall of a stone from the top of their chimney, which dashed in pieces the iron pot while the beans were boiling.

† Col. Marcy was born in Woodstock, Ct. where, in 1723 he married Miss Prudence Morris. The humble rank which he held in society at that time may be inferred from the fact, that his first overtures to Miss Prudence were sternly disallowed by her parents. The more effectually to prevent what they deemed an unequal match, it is reported that they even confined their daughter to her chamber, and forbade her lover's visits to the house. Notwithstanding these precautions, he found means of bringing the young lady to a secret parley one night from her chamber window. During this stolen interview it was agreed between them, that *he* should secretly repair to a place at some distance called Pamlico, and that *she* should obtain her parents' leave to visit a relative of her's who lived in that place. The careful parents could make no objection to their daughter's proposal, and as it would seem to place her beyond the reach of all annoyance from the unwelcome suitor, they sent her away. Here the acquaintance between Mr. Marcy and Miss Morris was renewed, and their mutual attachment strengthened till at length it resulted in matrimony.—They removed to this town in 1732 with a family of *five* children, which was afterwards increased to *eleven*. Col. Marcy soon became not only "*one of the principal inhabitants*," as he is here styled, but in the opinion of his fellow townsmen, *the principal one*. He was the first citizen who received the appointment of Justice of the Peace, and was the first Representative which the town sent to the General Court. He held the office of Moderator in *seventy* town-meetings, having been called to the chair at every *annual* meeting, and at most of the intervening ones, for twenty-four successive years. He was on the Board of Select Men thirty-one years, Town Clerk eighteen, and Town Treasurer eight,—not unfrequently filling *all* these offices *at once*. During the old French War he repeatedly fitted out soldiers for the army on his own responsibility, and from his own private resources, for which he was afterwards remunerated by

holders and other qualified voters," for the purpose of choosing town officers. That meeting was held Sept. 18, 1738, at which, Moses Marcy was chosen Moderator; Daniel Fiske, Town-Clerk; Daniel Fiske, Moses Marcy, Henry Fiske, Select Men; and Joseph Smith, Constable: to which were added the usual complement of Fence Viewers, Surveyors of the Highways, Hog-reeves, Deer-reeves, and a *Clerk of the Market*. It is rather difficult for us now to comprehend the duties of this last named office, as there appears to have been nothing yet *in the market*, unless it were wood and wild land. These officers were to hold their appointment only "till the anniversary meeting in March," when the public business of the town commenced in due form.

On the 13th of Feb. 1739 the Select Men of Sturbridge issued their first warrant for a town-meeting, which, as it gives an insight into the extent of their municipal affairs at that early day, I will here insert. It is as follows:—

"Worcester, ss. To Joseph Smith, Constable of Sturbridge.—In his Majesty's name you are required forthwith to warn all the freeholders and other inhabitants of the said town, to convene at the Meetinghouse in Sturbridge aforesaid, on Monday the 5th day of March next, at 9 of the clock in the forenoon, then and there to elect and depute Select Men, Constable, and other town officers (as the law directs) to serve this town for the year ensuing:—to furnish Mr. Rice's Desk with a cushion:—and to agree upon the granting such sum or sums of money as shall be judged needful for the benefit of, and defraying all necessary charges arising within, the said town:—and to agree and conclude upon any other matter or things, which shall be thought needful to promote the benefit and welfare thereof."

So far from attending to "any *other* matter or things" at that meeting, it does not appear from the records that *all* the matters were despatched which are here specified. There is no account of any money granted, or "cushion" furnished. In their next meeting, however, which came a month later, they granted the minister's salary, hired a man to procure his wood, and "voted that £25 (about \$11,10) *be put into the treasury for the town's use!*" If this seems to us a moderate sum for "defraying all necessary charges arising within the town" throughout the year, it should be remembered that, as yet,

the town. He died Oct. 9, 1779, at the age of 72, leaving an honourable name, a large estate, and a numerous posterity. The present Gov. Marcy of New York is a great grandson of his.

there were no schools to provide for, nor any paupers to support, while the Highway tax, which was by far the largest item of public expenditure, was paid in labor and teams. It may also be remarked in this place, that the price of labor, which is usually an index to the prices of other things, was 6 shillings Old Tenor, or about 14 cents, per day.

The subject of Education was brought into town meeting for the first time, Oct. 6, 1740. In the warrant for that meeting there was an article, "To see if the town [will] come into any measures to provide a school." It passed in the *negative*, and I can find no evidence of any farther action on this important subject for a year and six months!* At length in March, 1742, "the question was put, whether the town would grant £20 for schooling of the children in this town, and that the Select Men should dispose of the same for that purpose; and it passed in the affirmative." The Select Men divided this sum, giving £10 10s. for the support of two schools in the "South East part of the town," and £9 10s. for the support of two in the "North West part." So that the first step towards the advancement of Common Education in this place, was the establishment of *four* schools at the average expense of £5 per school. These were kept only in the summer season; and the names of the four teachers who had the honor of laying the foundation of learning among us (peace to their venerated dust!) were Margaret Manning, Mary Hoar, the wife of Jeremiah Streeter, and the wife of John Stacy.

The next year the town voted £30 for the same object, which was divided in the same way, and the year following they increased it to £40, one half to be expended in the summer, and the rest in the winter "to instruct children to write." A question afterwards arose in town meeting, whether the money for this winter school should be

* Probably there is not a circumstance in the early history of this town which the present and future generations will review with less satisfaction.—It had been a law of the Province for almost an hundred years, "that every township within this jurisdiction, after the Lord hath increased them to the number of fifty householders, shall then forthwith appoint one within their towns to teach all such children as shall resort to him, to write and read." This ancient law was substantially re-enacted with a penalty of £10 about fifty years before this town was settled, which penalty in 1702 was increased to £20. As the citizens of Sturbridge do not appear to have incurred this penalty, while they were thus neglecting to provide a public school, we are permitted to hope that there was some sufficient reason, which we cannot now discover, for that neglect. But to us, with only the facts which we have, it certainly appears unaccountable, that while the *swine*, the *cattle*, and even the *wild deer* of the forest came into remembrance at every annual meeting, and secured public favor, the *children* were thus forgotten.

laid out. It was finally left undecided by the town, but probably was not laid out, for in the next March meeting a grant of only £20 was made, accompanied by a vote, "that the school should be kept in four places in the town, and to choose four men *to provide the dames.*" The appointment of this School Committee, or "four men to provide the dames," was quite an advance upon any thing before known in the system of Common Education, and has long since passed into a standing law.

As yet there was not a school-house in town. The children usually assembled in some private dwelling, though occasionally in a *barn* till the haying season came and the building was wanted for other purposes. At length, in 1753, the town voted to build three school-houses. One was located in the South Eastern section, within the present limits of Southbridge; another in the North Western; and the remaining one in the centre. The next year a Committee was appointed to locate a school-house in the North Eastern part.

In the warrant for their annual meeting, 1754, I find the following article touching schools, viz. "To see if the town will grant a sum of money for schooling children, or employ Ichabod Sparrow Paine in that employment." Their action on this article is recorded thus: "It was put to vote whether the town would proceed to hire Sparrow Paine to keep school in town; and it passed in the affirmative." From the formal manner in which this gentleman is introduced to our notice, and the still more formal way in which his services are secured, I conclude that *Ichabod Sparrow Paine* was the first School-master that was ever employed in this town. Mr. Comfort Johnson, who has passed his *ninetieth* year, and is the oldest man now living among us, was one of his scholars. From him I learn that Mr. Paine was hired by the year to instruct *all* the youth in town; which he did by going in a circuit from one school-house to another, at stated periods, and receiving at each place all who could make it convenient to come, without regard to district or distance. The usual course of instruction at that time was something like the following. The child was first taken through the New England Primer, and Dilworth's Spelling-Book, excepting such portions as the teacher foresaw would be of *no practical use*. Then came the Psalter, which was the principal reading book; but, in order to give the youthful powers of elocution their finishing touch, they were exercised on the first book of Chronicles, or the tenth chapter of Nehemiah, or wherever else the teacher could find a page of pure *Hebrew names*.

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In Arithmetic the "Golden Rule of Three" was the utmost limit which the boys were expected to reach; the girls having no occasion for *figures* could be better employed in some other way. As for Grammar and Geography, the former was supposed to be of no use to common people, and the latter had not been heard of at this distance in the country.

The annual appropriation of money for schooling at this time was 70 or 80 pounds Old Tenor, amounting to 30 or 35 dollars. The sum was slowly increased till 1761, when a new impulse was given to the cause of education. Near the beginning of that year, "after some debate upon the situation of the schools, it was put to vote to see whether the town would choose a committee *out of every corner*, to take into consideration the circumstances of said affair; and voted in the affirmative." In pursuance of this vote ten of the principal inhabitants were constituted a Committee, with instructions to "report to the town as speedily as may be." The most essential part of their report was, "that each school district should draw out of the treasury as much money as they pay to the school rate;" which report was adopted by the town. This important measure rendered it necessary to establish school districts *with definite boundaries*,—a thing which had never yet been done. The school law then in force contemplated nothing more than the maintainance of "a school" in every such town. But where could a single school be kept, that would accommodate any considerable part of a population scattered over a territory ten or twelve miles square? To remedy this difficulty the people had already divided their school money between the Northern and Southern sections of the town, which divisions had again been subdivided between several schools. But the remedy was incomplete till the whole town was parcelled out into regularly defined districts, and the inhabitants of each district had the privilege and the responsibility of expending their own share of the school money, in supporting a school in their own district. Such indeed is the present law of this Commonwealth: but the plan was devised and adopted by the citizens of this town long before our law-makers had suggested such a thought. The committee who were appointed to divide the town into school districts, reported *five*, viz. "The Middle," including the centre village; "The Southerly," embracing what is now Southbridge; "The South West;" "The North West;" and "The North East." The same year the town raised £25 Lawful Money, or \$110, for school instruction, and adopt-

ed the rule, which has ever since been followed, of expending three quarters of the money in the winter, and the remainder in the summer. Other districts have been added from time to time, and the amount of appropriations increased, till there are now 18 school districts on the territory which was then included within the limits of Sturbridge, and about \$2000 annually raised by the inhabitants of these districts for the support of common schools.

The first notice that I can find of a *town pauper* in Sturbridge, is contained in the warrant for a town meeting to be held in May 1765. In that warrant is the following article, viz. "To see if the town will do any thing whereby the Old Frenchman who lives at Col. Marcy's Mills may be enabled to support his family, and pay his rent." The action of the town upon this article is recorded thus: "Doct. Erasmus Babbit brought his account of 19 shillings, 11 pence, Lawful Money, for doctoring the old Frenchman, his wife and child; which was allowed him by a vote of the town." It is certainly an intelligible and interesting comment on the early industry and thrift of this place, that the first call for pecuniary assistance from the town was not made till more than thirty years after its settlement commenced, and even then by a sick and disabled foreigner! We already begin to see that his Majesty's "Honorable Council" had mistaken either the quality of the soil, or the character of its settlers, *in judging that the tract of land prayed for was not capable of making a township*. It was some years after this first application for aid, before another was presented, and a much longer time before any one stood in need of permanent assistance from the town.

We come now to a period in the history of Sturbridge fraught with events of peculiar interest. I refer to the period of the American Revolution—a period which gave birth to an influence that has gone out from these shores to every land, and will be felt in every age till the last stroke of departing time. If we could ever admit the truth of that ancient maxim, "*vox populi vox Dei*,"—The voice of the people is the voice of God,—we might easily believe that there was something *divine* in the voice which summoned these colonies to that struggle, for it was certainly *the voice of the people*. I see nothing in the transactions of that eventful day more truly surprising, than that plain men, who had spent their days in subduing wild land, and making new roads among these hills, should take it upon them to settle questions touching the prerogatives of kings and the rights of nations. Yet such was the business in which the citizens of this

town seem to have been chiefly engaged for several years. Nor were the decisions to which they came on these points any thing like those windy, vapping speculations which will sometimes procure for a man the name of a patriot and politician. They were such decisions as men form when they feel that they shall be called to support them at the hazard of fortune and life; they were such as their posterity, after more than half a century of reflection, still approve.

In the warrant for a town meeting, which was held Oct. 17, 1765, a leading article was, "To see if the town will give their representative some instructions respecting the Stamp Act coming in force, imposing a tax upon these Colonies." Their action upon this article is recorded thus;—"After some considerable debate in the meeting about the said Stamp Act, and after reading considerable part of said Act, the town proceeded to give their representative the following instructions, viz. that the town look upon the duty of the Stamp Act to be insupportable, and do instruct and desire their representative to use the utmost of his endeavors *consistent with loyalty*, that said Stamp Act may be repealed." The representative that year was Col. Moses Marcy, who was also chairman of the Select Men.

Their next instructions to their representative show less tenderness of conscience on the subject of *loyalty*. The Lieut. Governor, and some other of his Majesty's faithful servants in Boston, had sustained a considerable loss of property in the riot which was occasioned there by the odious Stamp Act; and the question which came before the people of this town at their meeting, Sept. 12, 1766 was, "whether the town will give their representative any instruction what the mind of the town is, and what the town would have the General Court do about making up that loss?" Their views were expressed in the following rather remarkable words: "Voted, that our representative use his endeavor in the General Court, that the loss, which the Lieut. Governor sustained last year by the mob or riot respecting the Stamp Act, be made up to him with *as much credit*, and *as little charge to the Province*, as may be;"—which was afterwards explained as meaning that they would have the General Court *do nothing about it*.

The increasing burdens which Great Britain imposed on the Colonies increased the strength of their determination to throw them off. In this town a special meeting of the citizens was called by the Select Men, June 27, 1774, "to consider of some measures proper to be adopted for the safety and defence of the Province in this distress-

ed condition by reason of several late acts of the British Parliament." The Select Men at this time were Daniel Fiske, Nathaniel Walker, James Johnson, John Tarbell and Samuel Ellis. "After solemn prayer to God for direction," they chose one of their number to officiate as "Speaker;" and having discussed the public grievances for several hours, the united voice of the town, as expressed by formal vote, was, not to purchase any goods which should be imported from England after a certain specified time. They even entered into solemn covenant with each other to abide by this vote, and signed their names.

On the 25th of the next August another meeting was called for the purpose of acting upon the following proposition, which seems to have come from some other quarter, and was probably sent to all the towns in the County, viz. "That, considering the present alarming situation of our public affairs by reason of several late acts of the British Parliament, altering the course of justice and annihilating our once free Constitution and Government, a Committee be chosen in each town in the County to meet at Worcester, or some other suitable place, to consult and advise what is necessary and prudent to be done by the inhabitants of this County." After a free discussion the proposition was carried unanimously, and a Committee appointed, consisting of Moses Weld, Timothy Newell,* William McKinstry, John

* The Hon. Timothy Newell, Esq. was born at Needham, in 1742. He removed to Sturbridge, a young mechanic, without property or patrons, and established himself in the manufacture of spinning-wheels, chairs, and rakes, about the year 1763. In this humble, but honest calling he labored for many years. By industry and economy he was at length enabled to open a small store, which was gradually enlarged till he found himself engaged extensively in trade, and the owner of a handsome estate—one of the most considerable in town. His early education was quite limited, but by reading, observation, and thinking, he became familiar with many of the sciences—especially mathematics and mechanism—to which he also added an extensive knowledge of history and politics.

His natural and acquired talents prepared him to exert an influence in society, and soon brought him into public life. At the commencement of the revolutionary war he entered the army as Brigade Major, and when he left the service he held the rank of Colonel. He was one of the foremost in resisting the mutinous spirit which at length broke out in Shays' rebellion, and was next to General Lincoln in command of the troops sent by the Government to quell it. Either before or immediately after this event he was promoted to the rank of Maj. General of the division of militia in this County. As a civilian he was not less distinguished than as a soldier, having been called more than once to a seat in the Governor's Honorable Council.

While Gen. Newell was in the army he became acquainted with the religious speculations of the French philosophers, and perhaps, like many others at that time, secretly adopted them as his own. But he made no attempts to influence the minds of others, nor even withheld his support from the religious society in town. On the contrary he took a leading part in adding a steeple to the Meetinghouse, in which he also placed a town-clock at his own expense. He died Feb. 5, 1819, aged 76 years. His grave-stone bears the following honorable testi-

Salmon, and Benjamin Freeman. The convention was held soon after, and a report of their proceedings, "being read twice distinctly" to the assembled citizens of this town, was approved by vote.

Hitherto the people of these Colonies had employed no other weapons in the sacred cause of liberty than those of argument and entreaty. Ten years had already elapsed since the controversy began, and no deliverance had been wrought, no wrong redressed; nor was there any prospect of better success by a continuance of the same pacific measures. On the contrary new burdens had been imposed, and others still were threatened. They were thinking, therefore, with painful interest, of a resort to arms. The citizens of Sturbridge were not behind the foremost of their fellow countrymen in giving expression to these sentiments. - In a regular town meeting, Sept. 28, 1774, it was voted, "to provide four half barrels of powder, 5 cwt. of lead, and 500 flints." Timothy Newell and Erasmus Babbit stepped forward and generously offered to furnish one half barrel of powder at their own expense; which was received with applause. A committee of seven were then chosen "to make provision for the men of this town in case they should be called away upon any sudden emergency," and a vote was passed "by a great majority", to pay the men who should thus be called away. At the same meeting they appointed Capt. Timothy Parker a delegate to the Provincial Congress to be convened soon after at Concord.

In the month of November following, another town meeting was held in which the Select Men were authorized to provide still more ammunition. On this occasion the Rev. Joshua Paine, who was then Pastor of the Congregational Church, proposed to pay for one cask of powder himself, if the town would be at the trouble of procuring it; whereupon Lieut. Henry Fiske, one of the principal members of the Baptist Church offered to give 1 cwt. of lead to go with it.

From such expressions of individual feeling we may easily conjecture what was the general feeling in the community. But we have something more decisive than mere *conjecture*. That they might know the real spirit that prevailed in the town, and the precise state of their military affairs, they adjourned the meeting till the first Monday in Dec. at 10 o'clock A. M. with a request, "that all the men in

mony,—"*Distinguished for his wisdom in counsel, and his valor in defending the liberty of his country.*"—His wife was Miriam, the daughter of Col. Moses Marcy. Of their 9 children only 2 remain—Mrs. Allen of Worcester, and a sister residing in Salem, N. Y.

town, from 16 years old and upward, then meet at the Meetinghouse in Sturbridge with arms and ammunition in order for reviewing."

That meeting must have been one of extraordinary interest. Ten o'clock A. M. the 1st Monday in Dec. 1774 found this Common a military camp. It had never presented such a spectacle before, and probably it never will again. Here stood the elders of the town formed into a company of "Alarm men." There the gallant Capt. Parker was marshaling the active and athletic youth into a band of "Minute men." The brave Capt. Newell with his company of Grenadiers were drawn up in another part of the field; while a body of Cavalry under Capt. Craft occupied still another. Almost every male citizen over 16 years of age had become a soldier. All things being properly arranged, they marched into the Church in military order. The rest I will relate in the language of the town records.—"After solemn prayer to God, and singing, the Rev. Joshua Paine preached a sermon from Psalms —.* After the exercise was over, the adjournment of the town meeting was read and the remaining part of the articles which had not been acted upon. Proposed by the town to call over the list of the Alarm men first, the number of which was 103, some 60,—some more than 70 years old. Most of them were deficient as to arms or ammunition, and some as to both. The Clerks of the other companies returned to the town that the men were generally present, and generally equipped, or would be soon, and if there were any not likely to be, their names would be returned to the town. Capt. Ebenezer Craft for the troop in this town returned an account of every one in particular, that they were well equipped and all prepared."

There happened to be a few men in town, who did not make their appearance on this occasion; and the Select Men, with two other citizens were, appointed a Committee "to go to them and take an exact account of their preparations as to arms and ammunitions," and make report at the next meeting. When that report was made, the town passed the following spirited vote: "that it is the sense of this town, that every man in town able to furnish himself with arms and ammunition do forthwith fix himself complete; and be it further recommend-

* The preacher's *text* is not recorded; but if he selected the one most accordant with the real spirit of that occasion, we may conjecture that he took the 1st verse of the 144th Psalm;—"Thou teachest my hands to war and my fingers to fight." It is a fact, that very soon after this discourse was preached, there was an article in the warrant for a town meeting, "To see if the town will allow the company of minute men, so called, any consideration for their encouragement to learn the art of war."

ed in the strongest terms to all in town unprepared to defend our just rights and privileges and all that is dear to us, in this time of great danger and distress, to exert themselves to the utmost to be prepared immediately." A committee of one from each school district was also employed to obtain the signature of every individual in town to a written pledge "for the strict observance of all the resolves of the Continental Congress, in particular that part called the *Association*."

Such was the spirit which reigned in this town at the beginning of the year 1775. Nor was it for the protection of their own families and firesides alone that these energetic measures were adopted. Their views were broad. Their patriotism was comprehensive and impartial, taking its rise beyond the narrow sphere of private interest, and encircling the whole body politic. Many recorded facts might be stated in illustration of this remark.

On the 29th of May, 1775, the following instructions were given to the delegate whom they were about sending to a Provincial Congress in Watertown: "1. Respecting civil government (in case the petition or address to his Majesty should be rejected) we think it highly necessary to assume government, by and with the advice of our sister Colonies, as soon as may be. 2. Respecting the demands of the Grand Congress, we advise that the whole of their expenses be paid; and as to their wages, we think that 13 shillings and 6 pence per day is too much, and we advise our delegate to *plead in behalf of the Province*, that things may be carried on with as little expense as possible in this day of trouble and distress."

The citizens of Sturbridge had already borrowed money on interest to redeem the pledge which they had given to support the common cause. They had made great sacrifices, and stood prepared to make still greater. A vote which was passed at one town meeting to raise £100 for the purpose of repairing roads, was promptly reconsidered at the next, because in their judgment political oppression was worse than bad roads. They had been contemplating the erection of a new Meetinghouse, but even this, though greatly needed, they cheerfully put aside, till they should get through the present struggle for liberty. Such men had a *right* to recommend economy in the management of public affairs. And if on this point they were even rigid, it was the result not of *parsimony*, but of *patriotism*. It was "in behalf of the Province," and not of themselves, that they were pleading.

It is truly surprising to observe the alacrity with which they conti-

nued to draw upon their scanty resources to meet their country's demands. The following document which the Rev. Mr. Paine sent into the town meeting about this time, may be taken as a fair specimen of the general feeling.

"To the inhabitants of the town of Sturbridge.

"Gentlemen,

"While you are preparing arms and ammunition to defend our just rights and privileges, occasioned by the alarming tidings from Parliament, I feel it my duty to engage in the common cause of liberty, believing that he is unjust to God who can tamely submit to tyranny. I proposed [at a former meeting] to pay for a barrel of powder, or a cask, provided you would be at the trouble of procuring it. But as I understand you have been unable so to do, neither does it appear to me worth your while at this time. Still I find it my duty to bear my part in the calamities that are common to us all. Not to rest in words, I propose to make a present to the town of £100 Old Tenor, to be redacted out of my next assessment; i. e. to assess but £53; and, to oblige, I propose, if the town will give me security for what then shall be due in June, that I will wait one year for it, and longer, unless mortality or something extraordinary shall prevent."

One hundred pounds Old Tenor was equal to £13 6s. 8d. Lawful money, or \$44.44, which was about *one fifth* of Mr. Paine's annual salary. This sum he *gave*; and then, "to oblige," *waited four years* for the remaining £53.*

I have said that this generous sacrifice of the minister, in sustaining his suffering country, may be taken as a fair specimen of the general feeling at that time. And whoever will take the trouble to review the records of this town during that period, and examine the sums of money that were raised for bounty to the soldiers, for

* So great were the fluctuations in the currency at that time, that during those four years money had depreciated in the proportion of 20 to 1; in other words, the sum of £20 in 1779, was worth no more in procuring the necessaries of life, than £1 was in 1775. This was the report of a Committee consisting of Aaron Allen, Ebenezer Craft, and Timothy Newell, who had been appointed to make an estimate of the amount which should be paid to Mr. Paine. So that the £53 of his salary which he had permitted the town to keep in their hands during four years of distress, had sunk to the small value of £2 13s. when the time of payment came. But those noble minded men who were themselves engaged in a struggle for *justice*, had too keen a sense of justice to think of paying any thing less than the value received. In making settlement, therefore, with Mr. Paine, they generously voted "to grant him money sufficient to purchase the necessary articles of consumption which £53 would in the year 1775;" and accordingly paid £1060 as an equivalent for the £53 which they had borrowed.

ammunition, arms, provisions, and for other military purposes, will see that it was indeed, "like priest, like people." *Money*, however, was not the most costly offering which they laid on the altar of freedom. I have obtained the names of 239 men, all from this town, who at different times went out and joined themselves to the armies which fought the battles of liberty during the Revolutionary struggle. Among this number there was one Colonel, one Major, eight Captains, eight Lieutenants, and two Ensigns, besides the Rev. Joshua Paine, who officiated two months as Chaplain in the neighborhood of Sing Sing, N. Y.

Such facts as these show wherein consisted that invincible strength by which these infant Colonies were able to resist the will of Great Britain:—*it consisted in the bones and sinews of their lion-hearted yeomanry*. And it will appear not improbable to a reflecting mind, that the reason why these revolted Colonies did not fall into the hands of some aspiring Dictator, as it was confidently foretold that they would, if they left the Mother Country, was not so much because there was no one here to *dictate*, as because there were none to be *dictated*.

This strong repellency to every thing in the form of dictation, the citizens of Sturbridge discovered, not only in throwing off an *old* form of government, but also in adopting a *new* one. After the Declaration of Independence had been published to the world, and the people of this town in a special meeting for that purpose had solemnly "engaged to support it with their lives and fortunes," and had actually transcribed it entire in the book of their town records, a circular was sent throughout the Commonwealth, the object of which was to ascertain whether the people would consent that their Representatives then in session should frame and ratify such a Constitution and form of government for the State as they might judge best. When that proposal came before the citizens of Sturbridge in public meeting Oct. 14, 1776, it passed in the *negative* with but *one* dissenting voice; and a Committee, consisting of Dea. Daniel Fiske, Dea. Moses Weld, Col. Daniel Plimpton, Mr. John Holbrook, and Lieut. Henry Fiske, were appointed to draw up the reasons for this vote. The principal one was the following, which contains perhaps as much sound political truth as was ever thrown into so small a compass. "As the end of government is the happiness and safety of the people, so the sole right and power of forming and establishing a plan thereof is in the people; consequently we think it unadvisable and irrational to con-

sent that any set of men should form and ratify a Constitution of government for us before we know what it is." It was approved by vote of the town, and sent to their representative for his instruction.

The result was according to their wishes. The new Constitution and form of government having been drawn up by a special convention chosen for that purpose, came forth to the people for their sanction. And as a further illustration of the independent spirit which then reigned in this town, and the deep, inquisitorial scrutiny which plain men bestowed on the great affairs of State, I beg leave to insert here an extract from the records of the town meeting in which the inhabitants of Sturbridge acted upon these important documents.

"At a town meeting in Sturbridge, May 1st, 1780, legally assembled, the meeting being opened, Dea. Moses Weld was chosen Moderator. Then it was proposed and agreed, in acting upon the New Constitution and Form of Government, that the Bill of Rights be read first, and then the Form of Government, and last the address accompanying the same; which was done accordingly. Then by a vote of the town the meeting was adjourned to Monday next week, at 12 of the clock on said day.—Then met according to adjournment. The question was put, whether the town approved of the two first articles in the Declaration of Rights. Passed in the affirmative to a man, 111 voted. After some debate on the 3d article, the question was put by yeas and nays; 120 voted—yeas 73, nays 47. Then the question was put, whether the town approved of all the articles in the Bill of Rights excepting the 3d. Passed in the affirmative to a man; 61 voted. Then by a vote of the town the meeting was adjourned to the 22d instant at 7 of the clock in the morning.—Then met according to adjournment. Then put to vote, whether it was the mind of the town to vote upon the Form of Government together [i. e. as a whole]. Passed in the negative. Then the question, whether it was the mind of the town to read one chapter or section at a time and then put it to vote whether the town approved of them, passed in the affirmative. Then the question was put whether the town approved of the 1st section in the Form of Government. Yeas 50, Nays 8; 58 voted.—Section 2d. The question was put whether the town approved of that: 50 voted; all yeas.—Section 3d. Question put. Yeas 32, Nays 15; 47 voted. Chapter 2d, Section 1st. Question put by dividing the house, whether the town approve thereof. Yeas 14, Nays 34; 48 voted.—Section 2. Approved by all voting; 59.—Section 3d. Question put by dividing the house. Yeas 6, Nays

36; 42 voted.—Section 4th. Approved by all voting; 43." And so on, through every chapter and section. At the close of this scrutinizing process, Henry Fiske, Timothy Parker and Joshua Harding were appointed a committee to arrange and state the objections of the town to these articles, which passed in the negative. Of these objections it may in general be said, that they indicate a forecast, and a maturity of political wisdom to which our legislators have been gradually approximating ever since; for the most important changes which have subsequently been made in our Constitution and Bill of Rights have been in accordance with the views here expressed.

It could not have been expected that a people, so accustomed to think for themselves on whatever subject came before them, and to act according to their own individual judgment, would be entirely unanimous in their opinions touching those great changes in the government and laws which were then taking place. But it is a remarkable fact, that when the town had taken special pains to have the names of such persons laid before them as were suspected of being unfriendly to the Revolution, only *three* could be found!

On the whole I think it may safely be affirmed, that the town of Sturbridge was not at all behind the spirit of '76 when that eventful year arrived. Perhaps it may be said, that they were even in advance of it; for, if we enquire into the origin of that spirit, we shall find that it was just such action as theirs which gave it birth. They are usually *small* streams, starting out from here and there a mountain's side, and combining their separate waters in one channel, which make the broad and deep river, whose augmenting force at length spurns all resistance. Such, in fact, was the origin and progress of those mighty movements which resulted in American Independence, and to which this town contributed a *rill* of influence that we can trace up to a point of time more than ten years back of that result.

If, in sketching the history of Sturbridge through this illustrious period, I have said but little of other things than those which pertain to the Revolutionary struggle, my apology is, that the records of its civil affairs show that little else was done. Almost every other subject seems to have been either laid aside entirely, or brought into such intimate alliance with this, as not to be capable of a separate notice. And for a long time after the war had terminated, and the current of public business had once more found its regular channel, there was a spirit pervading the municipal affairs of the town, that would convince, even a stranger, that there must have been some

great and recent movement among the people in the military line. The citizens had the air of soldiers, and seemed to delight in transacting their *civil* affairs, as far as possible, in a *soldier-like* way. For example; the subject of fencing the burying ground came into town meeting May 12, 1794, and a Committee was chosen to report in what manner it should be done. Their report was as follows, viz.: "That it be done by a free donation; that the commissioned officers of each company of militia in this town be a Committee to inspect and see to the work; that they give notice to all persons within the limits of their respective companies to attend with teams and tools sufficient to wall said ground on the 16th, 17th and 18th days of June next. The town adopted this report unanimously, and then voted, "that Capt. Samuel Hooker come on with his company on Monday the 16th, Capt. Corey with his Company on Tuesday the 17th, and Capt. Marcy with his Company on Wednesday the 18th of June next."

The town of Sturbridge at this time contained a population of about 1800 souls, scattered over a surface of more than 56 square miles. By actual survey there were 28,929 acres of land within its limits; and the people, being chiefly agriculturalists, had distributed themselves pretty evenly over the whole of this wide territory. Whatever spot, therefore, they might select as a common centre for public worship and town-meetings, it must, of necessity, be at an inconvenient distance from many of the inhabitants. This circumstance, as the population increased, would naturally suggest the idea of a division, especially if any fit occasion should offer. Accordingly in the year 1783, when a new Meetinghouse was being erected, an attempt was made by some who were not satisfied with its location, to divide the town into "three Districts, or Precincts;" which, however, was voted down "by a great majority." The next year a petition signed by Dea. Moses Weld and others residing in the North Eastern part of the town, praying for leave to be set off from Sturbridge for the purpose of forming a new town with a part of Brookfield, Spencer and Charlton, was at first granted without much discussion, but was afterwards reconsidered and refused.

No farther attempt was made to divide the town, or in any way to disturb its original boundaries, till 1796, when Joshua Harding Jr. and others inhabiting the South Eastern section made request to be erected into a separate town with a part of Charlton and Dudley. Their petition was referred to a special Committee, with the expecta-

tion that they would report at a subsequent meeting. But when the article in the warrant was read, "to see if the town will hear the Report of their Committee," &c. it was "voted that this article *subside*"; and it does not appear that it ever *rose* again. The *feelings*, however, of the petitioners could not be so easily put in a quiescent state. They entered immediately into arrangements for building a Meetinghouse in that part of the town, and petitioned the General Court that they might be incorporated as a *Poll Parish*; which was granted in 1801. The number of the names enrolled in this Act was ninety. These ninety persons, together with their families and estates, though not separated from the surrounding world by any geographical lines, nevertheless formed a distinct community, which was known for many years by the name of *Honest-town*.*

On the 25th of November, 1811, by request of several of their number a special meeting was called by the parish assessors, "to see if the said parish will petition the next General Court to be set off from the several towns of which they are composed, to be a town by themselves, by the name of ——" The proposal was approved by the parish, and a committee was chosen "to take charge of a petition to be sent to the General Court." That petition was destined to encounter no small opposition from the several towns concerned, but especially from Sturbridge, to which by far the largest part of the petitioners belonged. The consequence was, a refusal of their prayer by the General Court. The attempt was renewed at the next session of the legislature, but with no better success. Not discouraged by repeated failures, though having just cause for impatience at the

* In a manuscript lecture delivered before the Southbridge Lyceum in 1836 by Moses Plimpton, Esq. of that town, and which has been kindly placed in my hands by its obliging author, to whom I am indebted for many important facts in this part of the sketch, I find the following pleasant remarks on the origin and application of this name.—"It may have been attached to us by some one in the older towns from which we had separated, in a moment of resentment at our obstinacy in not being satisfied to go seven miles to meeting; it may have come from some wag, or bar-room joker, over his mug of flip; or possibly from some one of our own really honest inhabitants, who firmly believed that there was more true, genuine honesty here, than in any other place in this part of the country. Be all these things as they may, it is certain that this place, now Southbridge, for twenty years or more before we became a town, was known, far and near, by the name of *Honest-town*; and whether the term was applied ironically, or in "sober earnest"; whether the character of our inhabitants for fair dealing between man and man rose above, or fell below the common standard, the truth would probably require us to admit, that, from "local situation"—to use the charitable expression of the amiable author of the report to which I have alluded—or from some other cause, there was a general want of stability, a kind of freedom from wholesome restraint, which was by no means favorable to the cause of good morals, virtue and religion."

many embarrassments that were thrown in their way, they drafted a new petition in 1814, and sent another agent with instructions "to *act and transact any thing and every thing necessary and relative to* towards carrying into effect the prayer of said petition, *in his power.*" But all was to no purpose; the prayer was still rejected. By continued importunity, however, the legislature were, at length, induced to send out an Examining Committee, whose Report was decidedly favorable to the petitioners; and on the 15th of February 1816, there was passed "An Act to incorporate the town of *Southbridge.*"

The whole number of ratable polls in Sturbridge, at the time of this separation, was 476, and the whole valuation of property \$325,233; of which, 151 ratable polls, and \$83,783 of its valuation, were set off to the new town;—that is, a little less than *one third* of the polls, and a little more than *one fourth* of the property, fell within the limits of Southbridge.

Nothing has occurred in the secular affairs of the town, since that event, of sufficient importance to deserve a detailed account in this brief sketch. With a diminished territory it has steadily advanced in population and wealth, till it has risen to a rank considerably higher than it held before Southbridge was taken from it; while the increase of that town has been in a ratio, still greater, and promises at no distant day to surpass either of the towns from which it was taken. The population of Sturbridge, as given in the census of 1837, was 2004. Its valuation at the same time was \$461,700. Its principal source of income has been its *soil*—that same rough and rocky soil, which the General Court, an hundred years ago, judged unworthy of sale and hardly fit to give away, as being "*not capable of making a township!*" The result has shown, that the first settlers of this town in placing their chief reliance on "the blessing of God, in concurrence with diligence and industry," rested on a firm basis.

Next in importance to the agricultural interests of Sturbridge, are its manufactories. The Quinebaug river, which passes through the centre of the town, furnishes many excellent water privileges. Three of these are already occupied with Cotton Mills, which run about 10,960 spindles and 300 looms, consuming annually 315,416 pounds of Cotton, and manufacturing 1,882,500 yards of cloth, valued at \$170,325. The number of persons employed in these three mills is 244. On the same river and its tributaries, there are also 3 Batting Mills, 1 Pistol Manufactory, 3 Grist-Mills, and 9 Saw-Mills. If we

follow this stream into Southbridge till we come to the original boundary of Sturbridge on the East, we shall find one large Woolen, and two Cotton Mills, besides several other smaller works, all propelled by the same waters. In the Woolen Mill alone, there are 10 sets of machinery, 300,000 pounds of wool consumed annually, and 125,000 yards of cloth manufactured, valued at \$375,000, and about 250 persons employed.

The present number of public schools in Sturbridge is 13; and the last returns that were made to the legislature showed the whole number of scholars to be, 560 in the winter, and 429 in the summer. The same year \$950 were raised by taxes for the support of these schools, to which were added \$200 by voluntary contribution, and \$90 to sustain a Select school of 30 scholars three months—amounting in all to \$1200. Probably this sum is about the average of what is expended in the town from year to year for the instruction of the young.

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

It will be recollected by those who have perused the foregoing sketch, that one of the conditions on which this tract of land was granted to its original proprietors was, that within seven years from the time of the grant, they should "settle an orthodox minister, and lay out to him an home lot, equal to the other home lots; which lot," it was also added, "shall draw the fiftieth part of the Province land now granted, and be accounted as one of the fifty that are to be settled."

None of the conditions which the General Court imposed were more cheerfully acceded to, or more promptly fulfilled. The company would have been far enough within the provisions of the Act to avoid the danger of any forfeiture, if they had saved themselves this expense till the last part of the seventh year. And in their circumstances, *if in any*, there would have been some show of reason for adopting such a course. They were few in number, and feeble in means. Their present expenditures were large, while their income as yet consisted of little besides *hope*. But they seem to have been men who really believed that "godliness is profitable unto *all things*," even to the clearing of a forest, and the planting of a township; for at the proprietors' *second* meeting, which was less than a year from the date of the grant, and which was called for the purpose of drawing their respective lots of land,—even before that important business was despatched, they discussed the question of building a Meetinghouse, and agreed upon a spot for its location.

There was a tract of land within their limits, known by the name of "Gen. Saltenstall's Farm," though it appears to have been a forest, like the rest of the township, and was then in possession of heirs who lived at New-London, Ct. The spot which seemed to them most convenient for a Church was on this tract of land, "near the meeting of the roads, on the West Side of Sugar Brook;" i. e. a few rods South of the present Congregational place of worship.

Measures were immediately taken to secure this spot, and a committee was appointed to open a negotiation with the heirs of Gen. Saltenstall.

When it is considered, that this subject came before that meeting, and was thus disposed of while they had not yet drawn their home lots, and as the *next* business after they had voted to pay £4 a-piece to defray the expense of laying them out, it will certainly appear, that the fathers of this town still retained the genuine *spirit of the Pilgrims*.

Their negotiation for a spot on which to place the house was soon brought to a successful termination, and arrangements for building were promptly commenced, as appears from the following votes, which were passed at the proprietors' third meeting, Nov. 30, 1731, viz.

"Voted, that Mr. Jonas Houghton shall have £8 14s. 2d. for his service in going to New-London and procuring a deed of the heirs of Gen. Saltenstall, and the charge of recording in the County Records.

"Voted, that the proprietors will build a Meetinghouse as soon as conveniently they can.

"Voted, that the Meetinghouse shall be 50 feet in length, and 40 feet in width, and 22 feet between the sills and plates.

"Voted, to finish the said house according to the articles drawn to finish the Meetinghouse at Hassanamisco, (now Grafton.)

"Voted, to have the house built, covered, and enclosed in the space of one year from this time, and finished in the space of two years, according to the above said vote.

"Voted, to choose three men to be a Committee to manage the affair of building the said house; and by vote, John Dwight, Jonas Houghton, and Joseph Plimpton were chosen to be a Committee for carrying on of the said work of building the Meetinghouse."

At the same meeting the proprietors made a grant of £525 towards the erection of the house, *which was the total sum of their receipts hitherto for the sale of lands*. They afterwards added £20 "for the completing and finishing the Meetinghouse." It was dedicated to the worship of God on the 19th of Sept. 1773, *more than four years before the town was incorporated*. The Rev. Mr. Baxter of Medfield preached the dedicatory sermon from Is. 63 : 5, "I looked and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury it upheld me."

But let it not be inferred that there was no public worship here till after the Meetinghouse was opened. It is said that even during the first season, James Denison from the South Eastern section of the town, and Joseph Smith from the North Western, Henry and Daniel Fiske from Fiske Hill, together with several others who had commenced "a clearing" in different parts of the township, as soon as they became acquainted with each other's place of residence, were accustomed to meet in the little cabin of one or the other, every Lord's Day, and spend their time in prayer and praise.

No sooner had the company finished their Sanctuary than they took measures to secure a suitable person to minister therein. There was an article in the warrant for a proprietors' meeting, June 24, 1734, touching this subject. In their action upon it they "voted, that there shall be 15 shillings levied, raised and collected upon each right of the proprietors, (the minister's right exempted) to promote preaching." The Rev. Mr. Cowell was employed as their first preacher. At their meeting in November following, a tax of 40 shillings was levied "to promote preaching for the year ensuing;" which, according to the Committee's report at the end of the year, amounted to £95 10s. The next year they expended £103 11s. 6d. for the same purpose.

The first Monday in March 1736 was, by vote of the proprietors, "set apart for prayer and fasting to seek direction for the making choice of a gospel minister to settle" among them. The pastors of four neighboring churches were invited to assist in the solemnities of that occasion. The result was a unanimous choice of the Rev. Caleb Rice to become their minister.

It must occur to every reflecting mind, that in respect to this subject, viz. the choice of a pastor, customs have greatly changed "since the fathers fell asleep;"—and that too, not for the better, either to pastors or people, but decidedly for the worse, to both. What minister of Jesus Christ would not consider himself more strongly bound to live, and labor, and die, among a people who had thus deliberately and solemnly chosen him for that purpose? And what people would not pause and ask counsel of God, before they broke asunder the bond which united them to a pastor whom they had thus piously sought of Him?

Mr. Rice was ordained to the work of the ministry on Wednesday the 29th of Sept. 1736, at which time a Church was also organized, consisting of fourteen male members, viz.

Rev. Caleb Rice
 Henry Fiske
 Ezekiel Upham
 Joseph Baker
 Joseph Cheney
 Ebenezar Stearns
 Joseph Allen

George Watkins
 Solomon Rood
 Daniel Fiske
 Jonathan Perry
 Jonathan Fosket
 Moses Allen
 Daniel Thurston.

The office of *Deacon* was conferred on Daniel Fiske and Ebenezar Stearns; and Moses Allen was appointed to "set the Psalm in the Congregation upon the Sabbath day."*

* There is reason to think that *Church-Music* was conducted by our fathers and mothers with more "spirit," and less "understanding," than it is by us. The chorister, who was always appointed to that office *by the suffrages of the Church*, having "set the Psalm," any of the worshippers, whose natural gifts would enable them to do it, were accustomed to sing the praises of God—sitting or standing promiscuously about in the assembly. The singers in this town first came into the practice of sitting by themselves in 1768. A petition was brought into town meeting that year, signed by "sundry of the inhabitants, requesting that they may have the liberty of taking their seats in the Meetinghouse in the front gallery, or wherever the town shall think proper, in order to carry on the duty of singing with more regularity, decency, and good order." The town gave them leave to do so till the next May meeting, which was about two months distant; and then voted that the same liberty "be continued to them during the town's pleasure." Soon after this they did still more for the encouragement of "regularity, decency, and good order" in the performance of this "duty;"—they voted the sum of "£3 Lawful Money for the purpose of keeping a singing school, to be under the direction of the Selectmen." The new method of singing by rule, however, and especially the *new tunes* which were introduced, created no small stir in the Congregation, and the Church appointed a Committee of three to investigate the unhappy differences between the singers and the people, and propose some method of accommodation. Their report, which was read from the desk on the Sabbath, is still preserved among the papers of the Church. It sets forth *three* grievances on the part of the singers. They complained, 1. That they were "not properly encouraged, so many being opposed to singing by rule, and some people leaving the Meetinghouse." 2. "Their persons and characters being injuriously treated." 3. "Their not having liberty to sing once a-day without reading line by line." With a view to obviate these difficulties and restore peace between the singers and the Congregation, the Committee gave the following advice, viz.—In respect to the *first* complaint, they advised the disaffected among the people "to read the preface to Mr. Walter's Singing-Book," and consider "whether or no it is even possible that a Congregation should join together in singing, and carry it on in order, no one knowing any rule, and so none observing any." Respecting the *second*, they recommended "a solemn regard to that golden rule of doing to others as they would have others do to them." Touching the *third* complaint, after conceding to both parties "the right of private judgment," the Committee add, for the consolation of the singers, "nothing is more common than opposition and discouragement in a good work." The report concludes with some sensible remarks to the choir, a general exhortation "to seek after the things which make for peace, and whereby one may edify another," and a proposal "that Psalms be sung once on the Sabbath days at the concluding of divine service, by reading one verse, or half stave at once, for the space of four months next." The old way of conducting Church Music probably went out of use at the expiration of these four months. And the numerous votes to raise money for instruction in singing, which are scattered along throughout the town records from that time to this, furnish gratifying proof that this community have known how to appreciate so important a part of divine worship.

The pecuniary support which Mr. Rice received from his people was truly *liberal* for that day, or indeed for any other, and shows that the fathers of this town well understood the arrangement, which an Apostle says "the Lord hath ordained;" viz. "that they which *preach* the gospel should *live* of the gospel"—an arrangement which has never been overlooked by their descendants. In addition to the several allotments of land, laid out and reserved for the minister according to the conditions of the grant, amounting in all to *one fiftieth part of the whole township*, "to be his, his heirs, and assigns," they voted as follows:—"£200 in Bills of Credit for settlement and encouragement, to be paid him, viz. £100 by the first day of May 1737, and £100 by the first day of May 1738." Also, "£110 in Bills of Credit Annually for his salary, at the value of 25 shillings an ounce in silver money: And at the expiration of three years after the said Mr. Rice's ordination, to add £10 to his salary, so as to make it £120, according to the aforesaid value of money annually."

In his answer to their call, speaking of the proposed settlement and salary, he says, "I esteem it to be handsome and generous, and accordingly do now accept it as such; yet, not being so thoroughly acquainted with the charge and expenses of living, if in process of time my circumstances should require and call for more, I should depend and rely upon it, that, as I give myself wholly to the work of the ministry, so I should receive a decent and handsome support;"—to which the people readily assented. In conclusion he added a suggestion touching his "fire-wood," which they were pleased to call "a reasonable proposal;" and immediately voted to procure him "such a quantity of fire-wood annually as shall be thought a necessary and convenient supply." In pursuance of this vote they began with *forty* cords a year, and paid a man £12 for bringing it. But soon finding that this quantity was not "a necessary and convenient supply, they made it *forty-five*, and shortly after raised it to *fifty* cords a year, "to be delivered at Mr. Rice's door of suitable length for the fire."*

* If we estimate silver at a dollar an ounce, which is a trifle below its real value, it will be found that the support granted to the first minister in Sturbridge was a settlement of \$160, a salary of \$96, and 50 cords of wood annually, besides a *farm* of about 500 acres. The *money*, at first sight, appears to be an inconsiderable sum; but it should be remembered that corn was ninepence per bushel and labor 14 cents per day; so that a dollar at that time would go as far in procuring the necessities of life as *five* or *six* dollars will now; and even farther, if the prices of other things, as is usually the case, corresponded with the prices of these.

It were rational to suppose that a generation which had shown such remarkable promptness and liberality in providing the means of religious instruction, would not "forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is." The only sources of information that are open to us, touching this subject, are the recollections of the aged, and such oral traditions as have come down from their fathers. From both these sources we have the most decisive evidence, that the early inhabitants of this town were emphatically a "Church-going people."

It is supposed, that during the first fifteen or twenty years from the beginning of its settlement, there was not an individual in town, of suitable age, who did not regularly attend on public worship, when circumstances would allow; and oftentimes when *we* should think they were absolutely forbidding. For example, those who lived six or seven miles from the Sanctuary, as many did before the South Eastern part of the town was formed into a separate parish, found in that distance no sufficient reason for staying at home, although they must travel all the way on foot, fording the Quinebaug or crossing it on a fallen tree in the summer, and on the ice in the winter. When the snows were deep, the inhabitants of a neighborhood would sometimes all assemble in one place and set off to church in a company, the men leading the way in single file and thus breaking a path for the women and children. These appear to have been the prevailing habits of the people till the beginning of the Revolutionary war. The consequence was, that the little Sanctuary which they had erected 40 feet by 50, became crowded with worshippers as soon as the population of the town was sufficiently numerous to crowd it; and the business of providing accommodations in the house of God engrossed no small share of public attention in many a town meeting.

The following transaction, while it illustrates the foregoing views, is instructive in several other respects.—It appears that the house of worship at first had no *pews*, but was fitted up with temporary seats, each worshipper being at liberty to sit, or stand, wherever he could find a convenient place. At length there was inserted in the warrant for a town meeting to be holden Oct. 14, 1741, the following article, viz. "To see whether the town will lot out the room in the Meetinghouse under the galleries, and come into some measures to do and accomplish the same,"—an article which would be utterly unintelligible to us, were it not for the record of what was done with it. From that

record it seems, that "*to lot out the room*," was neither more nor less than to divide it into squares of convenient size for pews. The town readily came into the measure, and voted that these several lots, should be assigned to as many heads of families; that whoever received a lot should have the privilege of building a pew thereon, and of occupying it with his family during the time of his natural life; that if he left a widow she should enjoy the same privilege; and that on her decease the pew should revert to the town, the town paying the original cost of building it. The business of making the assignment was committed to three men with the following instructions;—"to have due regard to age; to the first beginning in town; to their bearing charges in town, and to their usefulness; and to dispose of the room for pews to such persons as they shall think fit." The committee to whom was intrusted this delicate business—no less delicate than *to make out a scale of merit for the town*—were Daniel Fiske, Moses Marcy, and Isaac Newell. At the next March meeting they made their report, stating that they had "planned, divided, and numbered said room into 18 parts for 18 pews," &c. But the most material circumstance in their report is the following;—"We, the said Committee, met on the 9th day of February, 1742, and did agree, that, according to the instructions given us by the town, the following persons ought to have the several pew-spots, and the liberty of pitching in the following order, viz. Moses Marcy the 1st choice,—Henry Fiske the 2d,—Dea. Isaac Newell the 3d,—James Denison the 4th,—Roland Taylor the 5th,—Daniel Fiske the 6th,—Joseph Baker the 7th,—Joseph Cheney the 8th,—David Shumway the 9th,—David Morse the 10th,—Moses Allen the 11th,—Joseph Allen the 12th,—Joseph Smith the 13th,—Hinsdale Clark the 14th,—Ezekiel Upham the 15th,—John Harding the 16th,—Caleb Harding the 17th,—Edward Foster the 18th." This report was accepted by the town and ordered to be put on record.

From this transaction I think we may learn,—1. The high estimation in which public worship was held at that time,—2. The comparative *standing* of at least *eighteen* of the principal inhabitants,—3. The quiet spirit which then prevailed throughout the community, *no one uttering a word of complaint* at this assignment. It is impossible to conjecture what would be the fate of such a report, *on such a subject*, at the present day.

The Rev. Mr. Rice closed his ministry and his life together on Lord's Day, Sept. 2d, 1759, in the 47th year of his age. He was a

native of Hingham, was graduated at Harvard University, and was Pastor of the Church in Sturbridge 23 years. In Whitney's History of Worcester County his character is thus briefly sketched: "He was a pastor after God's heart; sound in faith; a good preacher, endowed with excellent ministerial gifts, and very exemplary in life, as well as social and benevolent in his deportment." He seems to have retained a strong hold on the affections of his people. Five times they increased the *nominal* amount of his salary, that they might keep it equal to the *real* amount on which he was settled, *graduating it by the prices of agricultural produce*; and at his death they voted £8 Lawful Money, or nearly \$27, to defray the expense of his funeral. The number gathered into the Church during his ministry, including the fourteen with which it was organized, was 114. *Fifteen* of these, however, near the close of his ministry, separated from what was called the "standing order," and established a meeting by themselves. The circumstances of this affair deserve some notice, not only as properly belonging to the Ecclesiastical history of that period, but also as standing related to important events of subsequent occurrence.

The original cause of this separation, (which took place in the year 1747,) was a religious awakening that prevailed in many other places at that time, the subjects of which were generally known by the name of *New Lights*. In this town they were called *Separates*, or *Separatists*, and had for their minister Mr. John Blunt, who was afterwards killed in the French war, at the battle of Lake George. They erected a small house of worship which stood within the present limits of Southbridge, not far from the Globe village. As was very natural, they felt that it was enough for them to maintain *their own* minister, and therefore refused to be taxed for the support of any other. But not being incorporated into a separate Society, the *civil law* of that day refused to release them, and this brought the affair to a most unhappy issue.

In the warrant for a town meeting May 22d, 1749, was the following article: "To see whether the town will pass a vote to exempt those people in this town that have separated themselves from the public worship of God on the Lord's Day at our Meetinghouse, from paying to the support of Mr. Rice." With our present feelings, and customs, and laws touching religious freedom, it would be one of the easiest things in the world to settle such a question. But if we throw ourselves back, in imagination, to that day, and look at the question in the light of usages and laws which then prevailed, we shall find the

subject environed with difficulties. The legislative Act of 1692, which was still in force, not only told every qualified voter that he must pay his tax for the support of some "able, learned, orthodox minister, of good conversation," but even went so far as to tell him in pretty definite terms *to whom he must pay it*. After granting to "each respective gathered Church in any town or place within this Province the power, according to the directions given in the word of God, to choose their own minister" the Act then proceeds as follows:—"the person thus elected and approved, accepting thereof, settling with them, shall be *the* minister, towards whose settlement and maintenance *all* the inhabitants and ratable estates lying within such town or part of a town, or place limited by law for upholding the public worship of God, *shall be obliged to pay in proportion.*"

The wisdom of this Act has since been called in question, and the whole code of laws touching religious worship, essentially modified. But such was the law of the Province at that time. The case being thus, it became a serious question between the two parties, what should be done. The fact that there was public discussion and deliberation upon it in town meeting, shows that there was room, at least for *doubt*, though at this distant day we may be unable to discover what the precise difficulty was. At their first meeting no vote was taken, though it appears from subsequent proceedings, that one party still refused to pay the ministerial tax, and the other still continued to enforce it by dint of *law*.

At length on the 18th of March 1752, the town held a special meeting, "to see whether the town will come into some method of agreement with the Separatists that were distrained upon for their minister rates." Moses Marcy was called to the chair. The excellent spirit which the venerable Moderator displayed on that occasion is worthy of all praise, and must have satisfied all parties, that, whoever stood in the way of an amicable adjustment, *he* did not. He requested the Separatists to be seated on one side of the Meetinghouse by themselves, and the rest of the citizens on the other. "The moderator then desired that there might be a friendly conference, to see if by some means or other we could not make up the difference between us, without going into the law: and after a long debate the Separatists were asked whether, if the creatures and all the goods that were taken from them by distress for their minister's rates in the year 1751 were returned, it would satisfy them, so that we might live together like Christian friends and neighbors? They answered, it

would satisfy them *for that year*, with reasonable satisfaction, and no further. Then they were desired to bring in, in writing, what would content them; which they did." The amount of this writing was, that they desired restitution to be made them from 1749, and one individual from 1748. "It was then earnestly requested of the Separatists, that, as we then did and do now believe we had a good right to do as we did, yet for *peace's sake*, we might meet one another and agree."

No agreement, however, was effected, and the meeting was brought to a close, after Nathaniel Walker, James Denison, Joseph Baker, John Tarbell and Moses Marcy had been appointed a Committee, "to treat further with them." What success attended this negotiation does not appear from any surviving record. A candid and careful review of the whole subject, I think must convince any one, that, although it usually happens, when two parties are contending, that they are *both in the wrong*, *these were both in the right*; one party having the authority of *law* on their side, the other being supported by the true and fundamental principles of religious freedom.

Twelve of those who separated from the Congregational Church, having for some time sustained a preacher of the same denomination, were at length baptized by *immersion*, together with their minister. Infant baptism, however, was not yet excluded from their Society, and open communion was still continued. A *new* separation at length was effected between them, and a regular *Baptist Church* was formed—one of the oldest and most respectable in the County. Those who still adhered to the peculiar views of the Separatists, held religious worship by themselves but a short time after this subdivision, and then were disbanded; some going to the Baptist Church, and some returning to the Congregational.

We now resume the history of the original Church, subjoined to which will be found a sketch of the Baptists from this date.

After the death of the Rev. Mr. Rice, two years elapsed before his successor in the pastoral office was settled. During this interval the pulpit was regularly supplied with preachers, among whom were Messrs. Storrs, Whitney, and Mills. On the 17th of July, 1760, the Church held a fast, in which the Congregation also joined, "to seek to God in Jesus Christ for light and direction in the settlement of a gospel minister, and to the Head of the Church to fit and qualify one with his gifts and graces for to be a minister of Jesus Christ for us;" —these are the words of the Church record. About six months af-

ter this, another day was set apart for fasting and prayer, "in order to give the Rev. Mr. Joshua Paine a call."

Thus it appears that their enquiries respecting a candidate were directed, first of all to God, afterwards to those who were in a course of preparation for the ministry; and that the leading qualifications for the pastoral office, in their view, were such *gifts and graces* as the Head of the Church bestows. When will the Churches again "ask for this old path and walk therein?" It cannot be doubted, that by so doing they would be in a fairer way to "find rest for their souls," than by the hasty, if not the *prayerless* manner in which this important affair is despatched at the present day.

Mr. Paine was ordained June 17th, 1761. The settlement of a pastor in those days was not that common occurrence which it has now become. The contract between him and the people, like the marriage covenant, was for life; and it was deemed just about as improper and lawless in the one case as it was in the other, for the parties to put each other away "*for every cause.*" It seldom happened that one generation witnessed two ordinations in the same place. The Ecclesiastical Councils, therefore, were large,* and the concourse of people immense. Mr. Paine was ordained on a platform erected under the brow of the Meetinghouse hill, the house itself being unable to contain the vast assembly that came together on that occasion.

As to the Meetinghouse it may here be observed, that by this time it poorly accommodated even the regular congregation on the Sabbath, if we may judge from the frequent petitions sent into town meetings by men and women,† for leave to build pews here and there, above and

* In providing entertainment for the Council on this occasion the town voted £13 6s. 8d! Lawful Money, or \$44,50—a sum, which at that time would purchase an entertainment at least three times as bountiful as can be furnished for the same money now. It was, in fact, just equal to the amount raised that year for the *support of all the public schools in town!*

† The following extract from the records of the March Meeting in 1762, is here given as a specimen.—"Then there was a petition from Hannah Allen, Elizabeth Hooker, Rhoda Clark, Dinah Allen, Abigail Mason, Susannah Solis, Lois Johnson, Mary Mason, Abigail Fay, Elizabeth Allen, Abigail Allen, Deborah Faulkner, Hannah Chub, and Elizabeth Chickering, shewing that the hind seat in the women's side-gallery is so low that they cannot see the minister, and the other seats are full and crowded, so that it is very uncomfortable sitting;—praying favor of the town, that the town would grant them liberty to build a pew where the hind seat is" &c.—"The petition was read, and after some debate thereon," was granted.

Whatever difference of opinion may exist in the community respecting the propriety of "women's petitions" to Congress, for the redress of national grievances, certainly no one in Christendom can discourage the weaker sex from making known their request in a grievance like this.

below, wherever a nook or corner could be found for a pew to stand. It is reported by those who remember that house, that even the *gallery stairs* were seated from the bottom to the top with children and youth.

The subject of a new Meetinghouse began to be agitated in town meeting soon after Mr. Paine's ordination, and in 1773 there was a "clear vote" taken to build one; which vote, however, was afterwards reconsidered, and the whole subject deferred, on account of the impending contest with Great Britain. No sooner had the Revolutionary war been brought to a close, than the Meetinghouse came again into remembrance. After various attempts and many long debates, the work was undertaken, and the frame of the present Congregational Church was raised on the 29th and 30th days of June, 1784. It was not finished and dedicated to the worship of God till the expiration of two years and six months,—many embarrassments having been thrown in the way of the building committee by those who lived in parts of the town remote from the centre. The inhabitants of that part which is now included within the limits of Southbridge, in particular, made strenuous opposition; and not without reason; for many of them were obliged to travel from four, to seven miles, in coming to Church. This inconvenience, however, was remedied before many years had elapsed by the erection of another house of worship in that section of the town, and the organization of a distinct Society.

The Rev. Mr. Paine, having served God in the ministry of his Son for the space of 38 years, 6 months, and 11 days, rested from his labors on the 28th of December, 1799, in the 65th year of his age. He was a native of Pomfret, Ct. and a graduate of Yale College. He is represented as "a man of highly respectable talents, an impressive speaker, much esteemed by his people, and one who left behind him a salutary and lasting influence." The period of his labors in this place was one of peculiar discouragement to a minister. The public mind was kept in a state of agitation during almost the whole time—first, by the oppressive measures of Great Britain, then, by the Revolutionary war, and afterwards, by the pecuniary embarrassments consequent upon that exhausting struggle. So engrossing were the political affairs of the day, that vital religion lost, in a great measure, its power over the minds even of those who enjoyed the means of grace; while a large proportion of the young men, who constitute the minister's brightest hope, were scattered through the land, as

sheep without a shepherd, breathing the moral atmosphere of the camp and the battle-field.

The whole number gathered into the church during Mr. Paine's ministry cannot be definitely ascertained, as the records, embracing a period of 30 years, have unfortunately been lost. During the first 7 years of his labors, however, the number of the names was 54. There were found to be 112 resident members when his successor was settled.

Mr. Paine's pecuniary support, as fixed at the time of his ordination, was a settlement of £200 Lawful Money, equal to \$666, and a salary of £66 13s. 4d. or \$222. But the continual fluctuations in the value of money, rendered it necessary, almost every year, to change the nominal amount; and amid all the distresses of the times, the records of the town show a determination, on the part of the people, to make good the value which they promised at first. They even continued the regular salary one full year to the widow of their deceased minister, besides raising money to supply the pulpit with stated preaching. During a part of the year following his decease, they employed the Rev. Mr. Leonard, of the Baptist Church, and both congregations met once more in the same house—a pleasing evidence of kind feelings, at that time, between the two denominations, which are not known to have been essentially interrupted since.

The Rev. Otis Lane, a native of Rowley, and a graduate of Harvard University, was ordained as successor to Mr. Paine, Dec. 10th, 1800. The ordaining Council consisted of 18 Pastors and 26 Delegates—44 in all. The sermon was preached by the Rev. Abiel Holmes, D. D. of Cambridge, and was published soon after.

The conditions on which Mr. Lane was settled, left him at liberty to ask for a dissolution of the compact at any time when he might deem the reasons sufficient for doing it,—which reasons he was bound to communicate in writing to the other party at least one year before the final action thereon. The Society had liberty to do the same whenever two thirds of the legal voters should request it. This was the first instance in Sturbridge, and *one* of the first in the State, of any provision being made, in the settlement of a pastor, for dissolving his connection with the people. It is now the common practice. And although there is some diversity of opinion among good people respecting its utility, all must accede to the following propositions.—1. There *may be* causes which shall not only *justify* but *demand* a separation between the pastor and his flock. 2. When either

party *think* that such causes exist, the separation will be effected, in some way or other, whether the contract makes provision for it or not.—3. The more peaceably such an event can be brought to pass, the better it is for both parties. The truth of these propositions being allowed, it seems to follow as a necessary inference, that there is *reason* for the modern practice, even if no other reason can be found than that which Christ has assigned for the Mosaic law of divorce, —*the hardness of their hearts.*

On the 30th of August 1801, a colony, consisting of 20 persons, took dismission from this church, for the purpose of being organized into what has since become the Congregational Church in Southbridge. I have already noticed the erection of a Meetinghouse in that part of the town. That house was commenced in 1797, and dedicated in 1800. The next year an Act was passed in the Legislature, “setting off a number of the inhabitants of the South East part of Sturbridge, the South West part of Charlton, and the West part of Dudley, into a Poll Parish, for the purpose of a Religious Society.” These were of several different denominations, but they all came into an agreement, that each denomination should have their own minister a part of the time proportioned to the amount of money subscribed by each for the support of preaching. This arrangement continued for the space of 16 years, during which time *74 different ministers were employed*, embracing Congregationalists, Baptists, Universalists and Methodists. At length the Congregationalists, having sold their inheritance in the Meetinghouse to the Baptists, were incorporated into a distinct Society, ordained a minister, and sustained public worship by themselves in a private dwelling, till 1821, when they erected the house in which they now worship God.*

The departure of this colony from the original Church in Sturbridge, was not the only, nor indeed the most material diminution of strength which it experienced about this time. For a number of years subsequent to 1800, the most noticeable circumstance which

* The Rev. Jason Park, their first minister, was ordained Dec. 18, 1816, and continued in the office 16 years. He was dismissed Dec. 18, 1832, and soon after removed to Michigan, where he still preaches a part of the time. His successor, the Rev. Henry J. Lamb, was ordained June 6, 1833. After a short ministry he was dismissed, April 23, 1835, and has subsequently been settled in Chelsea, where he still remains. Their present pastor, the Rev. Eber Carpenter, was installed Dec. 1, 1835. He was graduated at Yale College, studied Theology at Andover, and was a settled minister in the first parish of York, Me. for several years before his removal to Southbridge. The Church and Society are in a peaceful and prosperous state. The number belonging to the Church is about 120.

the *records* present, is *spiritual declension*. Family worship was much neglected; brotherly love was growing cold; roots of bitterness were springing up. The recorded lamentations of the pastor over the deserted ways of Zion and in view of the small numbers who were joining themselves to the Lord, are truly affecting. But the time to favor Zion was at hand. It arrived in 1810. That year was a season of "refreshing from the presence of the Lord," in which 40 members were added to the Church. This may be considered the greatest, if not indeed the *first* revival of religion which the town had ever enjoyed, and formed a new era in the history of this Church. An impulse was given to spiritual religion, which is probably felt to the present day. Mr. Lane was pastor of this Church about 18 years, in which time it was increased by the addition of 98 members—84 by profession, and 14 by letter. His dismissal took place, Feb. 24, 1819. He was afterwards installed over the Church in Voluntown and Sterling, Ct. where he remained till the infirmities of advancing age disqualified him for a longer continuance in the gospel ministry. He now resides with his children, affectionately remembered by the Church to whose service he gave the vigor of his life.

The Rev. Alvan Bond, a native of Sutton, and a graduate of Brown University, who had recently completed his Theological studies at Andover, came to this town in June 1819, as a temporary supply, and was ordained to the pastoral office, Nov. 30th of the same year. Mr. Bond's first business was the "delightful task" of gathering into the Church the fruits of a religious revival which commenced during the last year of his predecessor's ministry. The number added to the Lord at that time was about 25. "Nothing of special interest," says Mr. Bond in a note to the author of this sketch, "occurred for several years. At length in the autumn of 1825 God visited that people again with the outpouring of his Spirit. That work was preceded by special efforts on the part of the pastor to awaken professed Christians to their duty. The measures pursued consisted mainly in successive and continued appeals to the Church from the pulpit, followed by pastoral visitation and meetings for prayer. Never shall I forget the powerful interest of that time of refreshing." About 40 were gathered into the Church in 1826, and nearly 20 in the year following, as the results of this gracious visitation. During the 12 years of his ministry in this place 123 were added to the Church, Sabbath Schools and Bible Classes were established in different parts of the town, and a Temperance Society formed. The talents of Mr. Bond

being equally well suited to another, and in some respects a more important sphere, he was called away from the pastoral office, Oct. 3, 1831, to the Professorship of Sacred Literature in the Theological Seminary at Bangor, Me. After a residence in that Seminary for the space of three years, he returned again to the ministry, and was installed over the second Congregational Church in Norwich, Ct. May 7th, 1835, where he still remains.

The present pastor of this Church, a native of Plymouth, and a graduate of Amherst College, preached his first sermon here Oct. 2d, 1831,—the next Sabbath after he had completed his Theological course at Andover, and the day before his predecessor was dismissed. He was ordained on the 21st of December following. With his ministry the Society commenced their present method of supporting the gospel by *voluntary subscription*. The facility and promptness with which it has uniformly been effected in this way, have removed all thoughts of returning to the ancient method of taxation.

The wonders which divine grace has wrought in behalf of this Church, since the time of my connexion with it, are too many to be recounted in this brief sketch; and yet they are too striking to be wholly overlooked. In coming to this part of the Lord's vineyard seven years ago, I came to a field "white already to harvest." A deep religious interest, which began to pervade this town near the close of Mr. Bond's ministry, continued with but little or no abatement through the first year and a half of my own. Indeed, some were admitted to the Church at every communion season, with a single exception, for more than *two* years. And often has the Spirit of God since that time aroused this community, in a greater or less degree, to the care of the soul. During these seven years the Lord has added to this Church 203 by profession, and 56 by letters of recommendation, 259 in all. The whole number now connected with it is 335. In the same period of time this Church and religious Society have contributed to various objects of Christian charity about \$4,000, besides furnishing occasional aid to several young men of this town in their preparation for the sacred ministry.

In 1835 the interior of the Meetinghouse was entirely remodeled, on a plan which furnishes many more and much better seats, than it supplied before. An example, so worthy of imitation, has since been followed in at least *six* of the neighboring towns.

The following are the names of those who have sustained the office of *Deacon* in the Congregational Church since its organization.

The *date* indicates the year in which they were elected. A chasm of 30 years in the Records of Mr. Paine's ministry, renders it impossible to assign a date to those who were appointed to office during that interval. The four last named brethren still officiate.

1736, Daniel Fiske	Roland Clark
1736, Ebenezer Stearns	Elcazar Hebbard
1741, Isaac Newell	1807, Joel Plimpton
1747, Joseph Baker	1808, Daniel Plimpton
1749, Edward Foster	1826, Zenas Dunton
1764, Moses Weld	1826, George Davis
Joshua Harding	1832, Ephraim M. Lyon
Job Hamant	1832, James Chapin.

THE BAPTIST CHURCH.*

The Baptist Church in this town is one of the oldest in the County of Worcester. It was organized about the year 1750. Its original members withdrew from the Congregational Church under the care of Mr. Caleb Rice, several years earlier, but did not enter into a separate organization. Their first place of worship was a school house, situated not far from the spot where their first Meetinghouse afterwards stood.

Rev. William Ewing was their first Minister. He is represented as a pious and devoted man. He had been a soldier in the French war before he enlisted as a "soldier of the Cross."³ He served in General Braddock's army, and was in the battle, called "Braddock's fight." After a short ministry in this town he removed to another part of the Lord's vineyard, and the Church was left without a pastor for many years. In 1784 they erected a Meetinghouse on Fiske Hill, by voluntary contribution, and on the 27th of Oct. the same year, the Rev. Jordon Dodge was ordained their pastor. The Church was

* It is with unfeigned regret that I find myself unable to give a more extended account of this Church. Its records for the first 30 years are lost; and some important documents of later date, which were supposed to be extant, have utterly eluded the most diligent search. It is only by the hope that these *few* facts may be of service to some other one in compiling a *more complete* history, that I am induced to insert this imperfect sketch.

greatly prospered during the first three years of his ministry. He is said to have been a fervent, energetic speaker, having unusual command over the feelings of his audience. But his moral character at length falling under censure, he was dismissed from his pastoral office in 1788, and silenced from preaching soon after. Various attempts were made to procure a successor, and a number of ministers were employed to supply the pulpit, among whom were Messrs. Baldwin, Rathbun and Root. But no permanent teacher was obtained till 1794, when the Rev. Zenas L. Leonard, a native of Bridgewater, and a graduate of Brown University, came to this place. After supplying the pulpit stately about two years, he was ordained as their pastor, Sept. 15, 1796. During his ministry the Church enjoyed several precious seasons of revival, and important additions were made, especially in the years 1810, 18, 25, and 31. It is supposed that during Mr. Leonard's whole ministry he baptized, in this, and the surrounding towns, more than 200 persons.

In 1817, 22 members of his Church were dismissed, for the purpose of forming a Church in Southbridge. The same year 14 persons living in Brookfield were admitted as a branch of the Church in this town, and received a share of ministerial labor. A few years after this, a Colony of about 20 members were dismissed from Mr. Leonard's charge and organized into a Baptist Church in Holland.

On the 13th of Oct. 1832, Mr. Leonard was compelled, by the growing infirmities of age, to resign the pastoral office, having served God in the gospel ministry for the space of 38 years. The Rev. Abiel Fisher, formerly of Bellingham, supplied his place during the last year of this period.

Their first Meetinghouse, by this time was going to decay; and as it stood at an inconvenient distance from many of the Society, in 1832 they erected a new and far more commodious one, in the centre village, on a corner of the old Burying-ground. It was dedicated Jan. 8, 1833, and the Rev. Addison Parker installed in the pastoral office the same day. Mr. Parker was graduated at Middlebury College, was afterwards a Tutor in Waterville, and had been settled over the Baptist Church in Southbridge five years and a half when he was invited to this town. He continued with this people till Dec. 12, 1835, when he accepted a call to settle in Methuen, and was dismissed from his charge in Sturbridge. The Rev. Isaac Merriam, formerly a minister in Maine, was recognized as his successor in August 1836, and took dismission the following year.

The present pastor of the Church is the Rev. O. O. Stearns, a graduate of Brown University. His ordination took place Sept. 25, 1837. It is impossible to determine, with any accuracy, the number admitted to this Church since its organization. Its present number is not far from 130.

The Baptist Society have just completed the removal of their Meetinghouse to Fiskdale village, about 2 miles from its former location. As this arrangement brings the Sanctuary to the doors of many who have hitherto found it inconvenient to attend Church statedly, it is presumed that they will hereafter avail themselves of that privilege.

The following are the names of those who have held the office of *Deacon* in this Church since its organization, viz.

Daniel Fiske	John Phillips
John Newell	Jonathan Lyon
Jonathan Phillips	Moses Fiske
Henry Fiske	Prince Bracket.

APPENDIX.

List of Graduates.

H. U. denotes Harvard University, Y. C. Yale College, B. U. Brown University, D. C. Dartmouth College, and A. C. Amherst College. The following mark, (*) indicates those who belonged to that part of the town which is now included within the limits of Southbridge.

Caleb Rice, H. U. 1764. Son of the Rev. Caleb Rice, the first minister in Sturbridge.

Nathan Rice, H. U. 1773. Son of the same. He was Colonel in the U. States Army which was stationed at Oxford during the winter of 1798-9, and afterwards removed to Burlington, Vt. where he died a few years since.

Joshua Paine, H. U. 1784. Son of the Rev. Joshua Paine. Having completed his Theological studies, he was ordained Pastor of the first Church in Charlestown, June 10, 1787, and was the first minister settled there after the conflagration of the town by the British in 1775. He died Feb. 27, 1788, after a short ministry of less than two years.

Thomas Babbit, H. U. 1784. Physician. He pursued his professional studies with the elder Dr. Warren of Boston, commenced the practice of medicine in Gloucester, returned to Sturbridge in 1790, and removed to Brookfield in 1803, where he died in 1813, having acquired a distinguished reputation, especially as a surgeon. He was a member of the Massachusetts Medical Society, and accompanied Gen. Eaton as Surgeon in his expedition against Tripoli.

Ephraim Allen, H. U. 1789. Physician. He studied with Dr. Erasmus Babbit of this town, and settled in Salem, N. Y. where he remained till his death.

Erasmus Babbit, H. U. 1790. Lawyer. He was also Captain in the Oxford army.

Samuel C. Crafts, H. U. 1790. For some time Governor of the State of Vermont.

Grosvenor Tarbell, Y. C. 1793. Physician. He pursued his medical studies with Dr. Thomas Babbit, and settled in Lincoln.

Alpheus Cheney, D. C. 1795.

John Paine, H. U. 1799. Lawyer. He was son of the Rev. Joshua Paine, studied law with the Hon. Jabez Upham of Brookfield, and practised law in this town till his death.

Timothy Newell, H. U. 1802. He was the only son of Gen. Timothy Newell, and died in Salem, N. Y. soon after he left College.

**Samuel Bacon*, H. U. 1808. Mr. Bacon read law with W. C. White, Esq. of Rutland, and Hon. Levi Lincoln of Worcester. While in this latter place he also edited the *National Aegis*. Soon after he left, he commenced the editing of the *Hive*, a political paper, published in Lancaster, Pa. In 1812 he became an officer of Marines in the U. States' service; afterwards an attorney at law in the State of Pennsylvania; subsequently a Minister of the Episcopal Church; and finally the principal Agent of the American Government for persons liberated from slave-ships, on the coast of Africa, where he terminated his valuable life, May 2, 1820.

Benjamin Rice, B. U. 1808. He pursued Theological studies at Andover, and is now settled in Buxton, Maine.

Josiah J. Fiske, B. U. 1808. Lawyer. He commenced the study of law in the office of the late Nathaniel Searl, L. L. D., of Providence, R. I. and completed it with Timothy Bigelow, Esq. of Boston, after which he entered into the practice of law in Wrentham, where his office became a favorite resort for students of the legal profession. For several years he was Senator in the State Legislature, and for some time a member of the Executive Council. During the latter years of his life he became deeply interested in the manufacturing enterprise at Fiskedale village, Sturbridge, where he departed this life, Aug. 15, 1838.

**William L. Marcy*, B. U. 1808. He pursued the study of law in the city of Troy, N. Y.,—settled in Albany,—soon rose to distinction in his profession, and is now Governor of the State of N. York.

Jacob Corey, B. U. 1808. Physician in Sturbridge.

**Daniel F. Harding*, B. U. 1809.

David W. Fiske, B. U. 1825. Lawyer in Detroit, Michigan.

Calvin P. Fiske, B. U. 1826. Physician in Sturbridge.

Henry F. Leonard, B. U. 1826. Son of Rev. Z. L. Leonard, and died at the house of his father soon after he left College.

David T. Lane, A. C. 1829. He had just completed a course of Theological studies at Andover, and received a commission from the A. B. C. F. M. with the intention of devoting himself to the Missionary cause, when his promising life terminated at the house of his



father, the Rev. Otis Lane, who at that time was settled in the ministry at Sterling, Ct.

William H. Taylor, B. U. 1837. A teacher at the South.

Abijah S. Lyon, B. U. 1837. Pastor of the Baptist Church in Oxford.

Benjamin F. Brooks, A. C. 1837. Student at law in Cambridge.

Chester W. Carpenter. Member of Amherst College.

John B. Allen. Member of Union College.

Darius Gore. Member of Amherst College.

Alfred Belknap. Member of Amherst College.

Merrick Lyon. Member of Brown University.

Besides Clergymen, the following *Professional men* have pursued the business of their respective professions in Sturbridge. Those whose names are marked thus, (†) still remain in the same occupation.

Physicians.

MESHECH REMINGTON

ERASMUS BABBIT

JACOB COREY, M. M. S.

THOMAS BABBIT, M. D. & M. M. S.

MATTATHIAS RICE

† ABISHAI HOWARD, M. M. S.

EPHRAIM M. LYON

† JACOB COREY JR.

† DANIEL MASON

HOSEA WHEELER, M. D.

† CALVIN P. FISKE, M. D.

ORSON PARKER

CYRUS HUTCHINS

† WILLIAM S. SAUNDERS, M. D.

Lawyers.

ERASMUS BABBIT JR.

JOHN PAINE

† GEORGE DAVIS.

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